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## THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA

CASSIUS M. CLAY, minister of the United States to Russia, wrote on May 10, 1867, to Secretary Seward that in 1863 Robert J. Walker, who had been secretary of the treasury in Polk's Cabinet, had told him that "the Emperor Nicholas was willing [supposedly during Polk's administration] to give us Russian America if we would close up our coast possessions to 54° 40'".<sup>1</sup> If such a proposal was actually made, there is not a word regarding it in the Russian diplomatic papers of that time and not a hint that the ministers of Alexander II. had ever heard of it. The first intimation of a possible transfer of the territory was made just before the outbreak of the Crimean War, and that was merely a "make-believe". Russia had no fleet in the American waters to protect her colonies and there was reason to suppose that England would seize them. In order to prevent this act of war the agent of the Russian American Company, P. S. Kostromitinov, devised a fictitious sale of the territory to a San Francisco concern known as the American Russian Commercial Company, represented by Lucien Herman, its vice-president.

The contract, with blank spaces for the insertion of the date of the sale and the purchase price, was sent from California on January 18/30, 1854, for approval to the Russian legation at Washington. In due time it reached the minister, Stoeckl, who consulted with Marcy, secretary of state, and Gwin, United States senator from California, as to the wisdom of making the transaction public. They were of the opinion that England could see through it and would not respect it, and left him to draw his own conclusions.

While the Russian agents in America were busy trying to snatch Alaska from the hands of Great Britain, the Russian American Company at Petrograd was engaged in a somewhat similar undertaking. Having obtained imperial authorization, the head of the company addressed a letter to the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company

<sup>1</sup> *House Ex. Doc. 177*, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 12. [Where no other indication is given, the statements made in the article rest on passages in the correspondence of Edward de Stoeckl, the diplomatic representative of Russia at Washington from 1854 to 1868, with the Russian ministry of foreign affairs. When Mr. Golder was preparing his *Guide to Materials for American History in Russian Archives*, published in 1917 by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, he was allowed to examine the correspondence of the Russian Foreign Office with its diplomatic representatives down to the year 1854; at a subsequent time, however, his permission was extended to 1870. ED.]

proposing that the neutrality of each other's possessions and ships in northwestern America be guaranteed. On March 23, 1854, the Hudson's Bay Company, on the advice of the Foreign Office, accepted the offer in so far as it related to the territory, but reserved for the English fleet the right to capture any Russian ship in the North Pacific, no matter to whom it belonged, and to blockade the Alaskan ports.

When the neutrality agreement became known the talk of selling the territory was naturally dropped. In order, however, to protect the ships Stoeckl asked Kostromitinov to send them south to San Francisco "to be sold only in form to the American Russian Commercial Company", which should use them to trade with Sitka and Kodiak. Judging from his answer it would seem that the president of the American company, Beverly C. Sanders, threw cold water on the proposal, believing that England would in the end secure possession of Alaska and that under the circumstances it would be to the interest of his organization to keep on the right side of the victor.

Though the real nature of the transaction did not become generally known, yet reports came out that Russia was anxious to sell Alaska to the United States. That part of the press which was friendly to England and France made use of this rumor and of a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, such as the arrival of one Dr. Cotman at the Russian legation in Washington, to show that the tsar's government was in such dire financial straits that it was obliged to sell its possessions. In the course of time the papers succeeded in convincing a number of people of the truth of this assertion. Even Marcy and Gwin, who knew about the fictitious sale, began to wonder whether after all there might not be something in the report; and one day they went to Stoeckl and told him that if Russia would sell, the United States would buy, and pay handsomely. Stoeckl assured them that there was not a grain of truth in the newspaper talk and asked them to forget about it. He feared, however, that they would not and that the idea would implant itself too firmly in the minds of the Americans to be easily uprooted. "*Ils sont des voisins dangereux et nous devons éviter de leur donner la moindre prise*", he wrote to his government. He probably would have felt more kindly toward the newspapers had he known then what he learned later from Marcy, that it was this very rumor and fear that Russia might sell Alaska to the United States which influenced England to agree to the neutralization of the British and American possessions in the Northwest, a wholly one-sided arrangement and altogether favorable to Russia.

The real promoter of the sale of Alaska was no other than the Grand-duke Constantine, brother of the Tsar Alexander II. On March 23/April 4, 1857, he wrote a letter to Gorchakov urging the transfer of the Russian American possessions to the United States. He gave three reasons why this should be done: (1) the small value of the colonies to Russia, (2) the great want of money, and (3) the need of the territory by the United States to round out its holdings in the Pacific. He suggested that in order to determine the worth of the property the retired officers of the company, Baron Wrangell and others whom he named, should be consulted, but he cautioned against taking their figures too seriously, since they were stockholders of the company. The matter was referred to Wrangell, and he put the selling price of the colonies<sup>2</sup> at 7,442,800 rubles silver, one-half of it to go to the company in payment for its 7484 shares and the other half to the government.

In the course of a month Gorchakov made a report to the grand-duke based on the opinion and estimates given by Wrangell. He explained the necessity of caution and secrecy in order not to injure the interest of the Russian American Company. At that time the company was having some misunderstandings with the American Russian Commercial Company of San Francisco about a contract made in 1853, and Gorchakov proposed to let the matter rest until these differences were adjusted.

Stoeckl in Washington was having trouble in protecting the interests of the Russian American Company. Each year more and more Americans were settling in the Oregon Territory, and this colonization made him uneasy. "*L'établissement des Américains*", he wrote to Nesselrode in January, 1856, "*dans le voisinage de nos possessions Nord Ouest mettra ces derniers dans un danger réel et deviendra une source d'embarras et de tracasseries entre les deux gouvernements.*" In November, 1857, he reported to Gorchakov that the situation was becoming very embarrassing. According to the treaty of April 5/17, 1824, between Russia and the United States, it was agreed "that the citizens of the United States shall not resort to any point where there is a Russian establishment, without the permission of the governor or commander; and that, reciprocally, the subjects of Russia shall not resort, without permission, to any establishment of the United States upon the Northwest coast". Russia enforced this article of the treaty; the United States did not. The Russian American Company's ships could enter San Francisco and its agents could open offices and stores there, but American

<sup>2</sup> The Alaska mainland, the Aleutian, and the Kuril Islands.

vessels and agents were not allowed the same rights in the Alaskan ports. The Americans were naturally and justly indignant and threatened more than once to close their harbors not only to the company's but to all Russian ships, which by treaty they claimed a right to do. Each year the complaints became louder, and Stoeckl predicted that in the near future this one-sided arrangement would bring on strained diplomatic relations between the two nations.

The grand-duke learned of this report and taking it as a text he sent (December, 1857) another note to Gorchakov impressing upon him more strongly than before the necessity of getting rid of the colonies. He was no friend of the Russian American Company and its high-handed methods. He condemned its monopolistic charter which made it trader and administrator at the same time and gave it control over the resources of the territory and power over the lives of its inhabitants. He ended by recommending that a commission be ordered to Alaska to report on the doings of the company.

In his reply, Gorchakov agreed to the proposal for a commission, but put obstacles in the way of an immediate sale. In the first place, he said, it was not fair to the company, and in the second place, if there were to be a sale the initiative in the matter should come from the United States and not from Russia. He assured the grand-duke that Stoeckl would be instructed to bring about an offer from Washington and that a commission would be sent to Alaska two years before the expiration of the company's lease (1861) to gather data, after which the government would be in a position to act.

About this time indirect pressure to sell Alaska came from an unexpected quarter. In a letter to Gorchakov, dated Washington, November 20/December 2, 1857, Stoeckl related a conversation he had had recently with Buchanan about Brigham Young, the Mormons, and the report then current that they planned to settle either in the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company or in that of the Russian American Company. Stoeckl asked the President whether the Mormons were going as conquerors or as colonists. To this the President laughingly replied that it mattered little to him which, provided he got rid of them. On the top of this came a letter from the company's agent in San Francisco asking for information on the subject of the Mormon migration to Alaska. Stoeckl was somewhat worried by these rumors and did not know just how much importance to attach to them. He did not fail, however, to call the attention of his government to them and to remark that if the Mormons should come, Russia would be obliged either to fight them or to give up territory to them. Stoeckl's letter made quite an impression on

the emperor and on the margin of it he made this note, "Cela vient à l'appui de l'idée de régler dès à présent la question de nos possessions Américaines."

At some time during 1858-1859 Stoeckl went to Petrograd on his vacation and while there discussed Alaskan affairs with Gorchakov. It was agreed between them that if America should make another move to purchase the territory it should be considered seriously. Towards the end of 1859 the move came. On January 4, 1860 (N. S.) Stoeckl reported that Gwin had approached him recently on the matter of the sale of Alaska and had assured him that the President was ready to buy. A few days later Gwin brought up the subject again and told Stoeckl it was Buchanan's wish that the Russian government should be sounded on the question and that, for the present, discussion on the subject should be with the assistant secretary of state, Appleton, and not with Cass, the secretary, who was purposely left in the dark. In the course of the conversation Gwin incidentally mentioned that the United States would be willing to pay as high as five million dollars. To Stoeckl this seemed a large sum, more than the colonies were then worth or would ever be worth from the point of view of revenue, and probably as much as the United States would ever be willing to give. Without directly recommending the sale Stoeckl nevertheless managed to slip in indirectly a few telling arguments in its favor. He pointed out that the situation on the Pacific had completely changed in the course of the century. The fur-trade which at one time held a commanding position was becoming a thing of the past, and in its place agriculture, commerce, and industry were rapidly developing. But the Russian American possessions, because of their geographic position, could not hope to grow along these lines and would therefore drop behind the other parts of the coast. If the company should in the future, as in the past, dominate the colonies, the situation would undoubtedly grow worse; and if the government should take them over no one could be certain that it would improve. Then again, the colonies were of no importance to Russia and could not be protected; any naval power at war with Russia could get them by going after them. Finally, and this was the shot intended to reach home, by the handing of Alaska to the United States England would be greatly discomfited. The conquest of California by the Yankees was the first effective blow to Great Britain's ambitions in the Pacific, and the acquisition of Alaska would put an end to them altogether. Sandwiched in between Oregon and Alaska, British Columbia could have no great future.

Among the documents in the Russian ministry of foreign affairs there is a paper on the Russian colonies, dated February 7, 1860, written by some one who had been in California and Alaska. There is reason to believe that the author was Rear-admiral Popov, who had cruised in the North Pacific about that time. He frequently wrote to the Grand-duke Constantine, who took a leading part in guiding Russia's naval affairs and who probably transmitted copies to Gorchakov. The report paints in black colors the great misery the Russian American Company had brought on the natives of Alaska, the harm it had done to that territory, and the injury it had caused to Russian commerce. All the company thinks about, says the report, is dividends, and the only people who profit by its existence are the shareholders. It has a monopoly of the trade in the North Pacific and this is deeply resented by the Americans who live there; and were it not for Stoeckl, Senator Gwin would have brought the matter to the attention of Congress before now. Not only is the company not advancing the interest of Russia, but it is actually alienating the good-will of a friendly people. It is easy enough, the writer goes on to say, for Europeans to sneer at the Monroe Doctrine and "Manifest Destiny", but if they were better acquainted with the Americans they would know that these ideas are in their very blood and in the air they breathe. There are twenty millions of Americans, every one of them a free man and filled with the idea that America is for Americans. They have taken California, Oregon, and sooner or later they will get Alaska. It is inevitable. It cannot be prevented; and it would be better to yield with good grace and cede the territory to them. Let them have the Alaskan mainland, the Aleutians, the islands in the Bering Sea—geographically all these are American—but let us retain the Commander Islands so as not to have the Yankees too near us. Russia, too, has a manifest destiny on the Amur, and farther south, even in Korea. Expansion in that direction will not weaken us in a military way.

Notwithstanding this eloquent statement of the case made by Stoeckl and Popov, Gorchakov remained cold. In his communication of May 14, 1860 (O. S.), he said that personally he could not see that from the political point of view it would be to Russia's interest to cede the American possessions. The only argument that could persuade him to sell would be financial, but the five million dollars offered was entirely inadequate and much below the real value of the colonies. He instructed Stoeckl to keep the negotiation pending and tell Appleton and Gwin that they would have to come up on the price. In the meantime the minister of finance would send a com-

mission to Alaska to study conditions on the spot and make a report, and on this report the future Alaskan policy would be based.

Knowing that Appleton would soon leave office, Stoeckl said little to him on the subject other than that Russia would not discuss the question of sale until after the expiration of the lease of the Russian American Company. But with Gwin the conversation was prolonged and the subject of finance was taken up. The California senator assured the Russian minister that the Pacific Coast representatives would be willing to offer a higher figure, but he doubted whether the other members of Congress would be of their mind. They would have to be reached by special arguments, such as the detriment to England's prestige and interest by the purchase, and the amount of money in the Treasury. In any case, concluded Gwin, negotiations were out of the question for the time being and could not be resumed before the end of 1861 or the beginning of 1862, when the new administration and Congress would be in; for the present Congress would not pass any measure, no matter how praiseworthy, that was recommended by the Buchanan Cabinet.

During the years immediately succeeding the above conversation both Russia and the United States had all they could do to retain the territory they already held without busying themselves with selling or buying additional possessions. The Russian commission which was sent to Alaska returned in 1861 with a report which was not favorable to the company, but the opportunity for selling was gone. Numerous conferences were held by the ministers on the subject of the disposition of the colonies and finally, not knowing what else to do, they allowed the company, under certain minor restrictions, to exploit Alaska for a time longer.

But it was an uphill and losing fight. As Stoeckl had pointed out in one of his reports, the fur-trade was declining and no new industries were successfully developing to take its place. The company had tried coal-mining and had failed; it had engaged in the ice and lumber business and had failed equally. Its credit gradually declined, and its shares of stock, which Wrangell valued in 1854 at about five hundred rubles, could not find buyers in 1866 at seventy-five. The company was drifting towards bankruptcy and appealed to the minister of finance to save it. Something had to be done and that quickly. The government did not wish to take over the colonies nor to hand them over to another gang of exploiters. In this predicament the minister of finance, Reutern, turned to Stoeckl (who happened to be in Petrograd during the late autumn of 1866) and asked him if the United States would now buy the colonies. The

Grand-duke Constantine sounded Stoeckl on the same subject. Stoeckl told them of the former offer and of the mistake made by Russia in refusing it, but held out some hope that it might be renewed. This time the grand-duke did not write to Gorchakov but, with Reutern, went straight to the emperor and laid the matter before him. Alexander called in the minister of foreign affairs and told him to look into the matter of selling Alaska.

Gorchakov proceeded in a methodical way. Early in December he asked the Grand-duke Constantine, Reutern, and Stoeckl, to submit their opinions in writing as to the best solution of the problem. The grand-duke merely repeated what he had said so often before, that the colonies should be handed over to the United States, and that Russia should devote her energies to the development of the Amur. Reutern discussed the situation from the point of view of the treasury. He said that the company was either unfortunate or inefficient, but, whatever the reason, there was no question but that it had come to the end of its resources. For the government to take over the colonies meant more sacrifices and burdens, which it could not afford. He therefore agreed with the grand-duke to sell Alaska. Stoeckl said again what he had said at other times, that Russian America was a breeder of trouble between America and Russia and that the sooner it was disposed of the better.

These memoranda were submitted by the chancellor to Alexander II. on December 12 with the gentle suggestion that His Majesty call together a committee of ministers composed of the Grand-duke Constantine, the minister of finance, and himself, minister of foreign affairs, to discuss (under the emperor's presidency) the Alaska question. It was also intimated that Stoeckl might be invited to be on hand to give information in case it was wanted. Three days later, December 15, Gorchakov wrote again to the emperor, at the request of the grand-duke, that it would be well to have present at the conference Vice-admiral Krabbe, minister of the marine.

At the meeting which took place on December 16 at the palace all the above-named persons were present. Reutern went into details about the poor financial condition of the company. Discussion followed in which all took part, and in the end they agreed to sell the colonies to the United States. When this was decided upon, the emperor turned to Stoeckl and asked him if he would not like to return to Washington and conclude the deal. It was not what Stoeckl wanted, for he was then slated for the Hague, but of course he had little choice in the matter and said that he would go.

The grand-duke gave him a map on which the frontiers were

traced, and the minister of finance told him not to take less than five million dollars. These were practically all the instructions Stoeckl had, or as he put it, "Au fond on m'a expédié en me disant voyez si la chose peut se faire et comment elle peut se faire?"

Stoeckl landed in New York some time about February 1, 1867, and remained in that city about six weeks, partly because of illness. He was of the opinion that nothing would be gained by pushing negotiations before the new Congress convened. He used the interval in maturing his plans and paving the way for the American government to make the first move. With this idea in mind, he put himself in touch with one of Seward's political friends and had him see the secretary and impress upon him the value of Alaska. When the minister reached Washington early in March, he called on the secretary, as was customary. The two engaged in conversation in the course of which Stoeckl remarked that his government regretted its inability to grant the concessions asked for by Mr. Clay, the American minister in Petrograd, in behalf of certain Californians.<sup>3</sup> Seward then told him that he too had a favor to ask in behalf of the citizens of Washington Territory who desired permission to fish in Alaskan waters.<sup>4</sup> To this Stoeckl replied that his government could not possibly grant it. After these preliminaries had been gone through, Seward came to the point and inquired whether Russia would sell Alaska to the United States. Stoeckl had gained his object; America had taken the first step in the transaction. After this the conversation proceeded more easily, and the two men agreed that a transfer of the territory would be of mutual advantage. It was decided that before going more deeply into the subject Seward should see Johnson. When they met again a day or two later, the secretary was somewhat non-committal and reported that the President was not enthusiastic but was willing to leave the affair to the judgment of the Cabinet. Seward consulted his colleagues and they authorized him to negotiate.

At the following meeting the two men got down to the discussion of ways and means. Stoeckl was desirous of enlisting the support of his friends in the two houses of Congress and having the initiative in the purchase come from the Capitol, but Seward would not hear of it. He gave his reasons, that it was an administrative measure which required secrecy, and that it was "*à lui de régler cette affaire*". Stoeckl expressed some doubt whether the Senate

<sup>3</sup> *House Ex. Doc. 177*, 40 Cong., 2 sess., p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4. Memorial of the legislature of Washington Territory to the President, received February, 1866.

would ratify the treaty when made, but Seward assured him that there would be no difficulty on that score.

The next question was the price. Seward's first offer was \$5,000,000, but when he saw the cold look in Stoeckl's face he raised it another \$500,000 and added that this was the best he could do. Stoeckl shook his head and demanded \$7,000,000. In his communication of March 6/18 Stoeckl told Gorchakov of the progress that had been made up to that date and said that he hoped to get \$6,000,000 and possibly \$6,500,000, and that he expected to report definitely within a fortnight.

They met again probably two or three times in the course of the week that followed. Seward showed such an eagerness to buy that Stoeckl took advantage of it and would not lower the price. The secretary added one half-million after another, insisting each time that he had gone to the limit, that he had exceeded the instructions of the President and the Cabinet, but the minister stood by his \$7,000,000, and "*grâce à l'intervention de quelques personnes influentes, j'ai réussi à les obtenir*".

When the question of price had been settled, there were still two other obstacles of lesser importance to be removed. Stoeckl had been advised by cable to demand that the money should be paid in London and that the United States should take over certain obligations of the Russian American Company. Seward would not accept these conditions. In the end a compromise was reached. Seward added \$200,000 to make up for the loss in exchange, and Stoeckl gave up the stipulation about taking over the obligations and agreed to cede the territory "free and unencumbered by any reservations, privileges, franchises, grants," etc.

Seward was in a great hurry to push through the deal before Congress adjourned, and he therefore asked Stoeckl to cable the outline of the treaty to Petrograd at the expense of the United States.<sup>5</sup> This was done on March 13/25. Four days later a reply came, "*L'Empereur autorise vente pour sept millions de dollars, ainsi que signature du traité*". During the night of March 29-30 the treaty was put in final form and signed by the Secretary of State and the Russian minister.

So secretly and so rapidly were the negotiations carried through that few were aware of what was going on. It was only after the signing of the treaty that the Secretary of State gave out the news to the papers friendly to him, and through them the public learned

<sup>5</sup> It cost the United States 45,000 francs.

of the purchase. Opposition manifested itself at once. Senators came to the Russian minister and informed him that they would not vote for the treaty, not because they had anything against it but simply because it bore Seward's name. Sumner asked Stoeckl that he withdraw the treaty, for it had not the least chance of being confirmed. To all these men Stoeckl replied that it would be dishonorable on the part of his government to withdraw. It was the United States that took the initiative and made the offer, and it was for the United States to see the affair through. The numerous friends of Russia, in and out of Congress, became active among the senators and pointed out to them the disgrace to the United States and the insult to Russia in failing to ratify the treaty after having drawn Russia into it. This idea gradually took hold and one by one the senators became more friendly, and on the final vote on April 9 thirty-seven voted in favor of ratification of the treaty and two against it. As to payments, both Seward and Thaddeus Stevens assured Stoeckl that the money would be voted just as soon as Congress assembled.<sup>6</sup>

Stoeckl, Gorchakov, and Alexander II. were greatly pleased at the outcome of the negotiations. On one of the minister's accounts of the sale the emperor wrote: "Pour tout cela il mérite un 'spasibo' [thanks] de ma part", and instructed the chancellor, "Remerciez-le particulièrement de ma part", and to reward him with 25,000 rubles,<sup>7</sup> and Bodisco, the secretary of the legation, with 5,000. Gorchakov himself heartily congratulated Stoeckl and expressed his belief that the transfer of title to the territory was of mutual benefit to the two nations, and ended his laudatory epistle by saying, "Je prends ma part de responsabilité dans la cession de nos colonies Américaines".

Stoeckl was not only pleased but greatly relieved, for the task had not been an easy one. Now that it was over he planned to bid "un éternel adieu à l'Amérique le printemps . . . prochain". Had he known of the troubles ahead of him he would not have been so light-hearted. It was understood that when Congress convened in December it would appropriate immediately the necessary funds to meet the obligation of the sale. In January, 1868, it became evident that there was a movement on foot to block the Russian payment,

<sup>6</sup> "Que le jour même où le congrès sera réuni il [Stevens] fera passer l'allocation et mettra l'argent à notre disposition."

<sup>7</sup> Stoeckl was disappointed with the smallness of the reward, considering that he had secured \$2,000,000 more than was expected.

by a group of men who supported the so-called Perkins claims against Russia.<sup>8</sup>

An American named Benjamin Perkins had asserted that in 1855 he made a contract with Stoeckl and a year or two later with one Rakielevicz, who passed himself off as an agent of the Russian legation, to deliver a certain amount of powder and ammunition to Russia. Stoeckl denied that he had ever made the contract and disowned Rakielevicz, who was a discredited Russian spy. The case was carried to the supreme court of New York, where it was dismissed. Perkins accepted two hundred dollars and promised that he would drop the matter. He did not. He took it to Cass and to Seward, but neither of them supported him. During the twelve years that had intervened (1855-1867) Perkins and Rakielevicz had died, and Stoeckl had forgotten about the affair. But when the heirs of Perkins learned of the purchase of Alaska they renewed the agitation. They enlisted in their behalf members of the House of Representatives,<sup>9</sup> senators,<sup>10</sup> lawyers, newspaper editors, lobbyists, and others, and set to work to force the Russian government to pay. Their first manoeuvre was to bring the case before the judiciary committee of the Senate and get favorable action, and then to demand that the sum due them be withheld from the \$7,200,000. But after reflection, and perhaps investigation, they came to the conclusion that they could not count on the committee. Their next move was to propose that the question be arbitrated, on the condition that the amount involved be held back by the American government. The Senate leaders would not agree to this. Stoeckl refused to consider it because no particular proposal of arbitration was suggested and because he felt that he could not arbitrate with men of that type.

Having failed in the Senate, the managers of the case turned to the House of Representatives. Their plan was to block action on the bill in the hope that Russia would buy them off. According to Stoeckl the backers of the claim were well organized and had some kind of agreement that three-fourths of the \$800,000 should go to the backers and the other fourth to the Perkins heirs.

Thaddeus Stevens, who in the spring of 1867 pledged the honor of his country to the payment, was one of the first to champion the

<sup>8</sup> The writer has not investigated the merits of the claims. His only sources of information on the subject are the diplomatic papers.

<sup>9</sup> Among whom was "Butler [qui] est intéressé pour 30,000 dollars dans l'escroquerie Perkins".

<sup>10</sup> "Des Sénateurs, des avocats, etc., sont intéressés dans cette escroquerie."

cause of Perkins, but after Seward and Stoeckl had a talk with him he changed sides.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding his attitude, the Perkins crowd was putting up a desperate fight and was able to block action. The impeachment trial of Johnson and the Republican convention also helped to delay matters. For a time it seemed as if the claimants would succeed in tacking on an amendment to keep back the \$800,000 from the Alaska purchase money. It was certain that such a proviso would not be acceptable to the Senate and consequently the bill would have to be referred to a conference committee. In that case R. J. Walker, Stoeckl's lobbyist, thought that it would be necessary "to manipulate some members of that committee".

Stoeckl was greatly worried. Not only were his reputation and the dignity of his country involved, but the friendly relations between the two nations, which he had done so much to build up, were at stake. By the end of March, 1868, he thought that the case was almost hopeless, and he asked for additional instructions. As far as he could see there were only two dignified courses to pursue: (1) to tell the United States that Russia had done her part and that if the United States were unwilling to pay for Alaska they could have it without paying; (2) to send a strong but a courteous note which would touch the American pride. The reply written by the minister of foreign affairs and approved by the emperor favored doing the second, but not the first for fear that the offer would be taken up.<sup>12</sup> Russia insisted on keeping the two issues separate. She requested that payment for Alaska should be made first, and after that the two governments could take up the Perkins claim.

When week after week passed without any noticeable progress Stoeckl became almost desperate. Johnson wished to send a special message to Congress, but Stoeckl, working through Seward, dissuaded him from doing so for fear it might result in more harm than good. For the same reason he asked Seward to remain in the background, for, even as it was, many congressmen were lined up against the bill out of enmity towards him. "Toutefois", wrote the Russian minister, "Mr. Seward n'est pas resté inactif et nous avons agi ensemble sur les membres du Congrès par l'entremise d'hommes influents<sup>13</sup> et d'avocats, et à force d'efforts inouïs, nous sommes

<sup>11</sup> "Je compte sur l'influence de Stevens qui le premier a soulevé cette affaire, mais qui maintenant travaille assidûment en notre faveur."

<sup>12</sup> "Mais vous n'ajouterez pas un mot sur une cession sans compensation. Je trouve imprudent d'exposer la cupidité Américaine à cette tentation."

<sup>13</sup> "J'ai en mon emploi quelques personnes sûres, entre autres le Sénateur [R. J.] Walker, homme très influent et en qui je puis placer pleine confiance. . . . Seward travaille de son côté et de concert avec Walker assidûment et emploie

parvenus à obtenir un résultat satisfaisant contre mon attente." On July 14, 1868, the bill carrying the appropriation was passed.

It is clear that congressmen were bought,<sup>14</sup> but there is no direct and conclusive evidence in the Russian archives to warrant the accusation of any congressman by name.<sup>15</sup> The men who sold themselves were undoubtedly those who were interested in the Perkins claims. We must, however, be careful to differentiate between them and others who voted against the bill from pure motives. Stoeckl himself realized that the purchase of Alaska was not popular and that it was regarded by many as a worthless and an expensive investment.<sup>16</sup>

The mental strain, the corruption and the dirty work which had to be done in order to get the bill through made Stoeckl sick at heart. As soon as it was all over he pleaded with his foreign office to take him from Washington, to send him anywhere it pleased, he did not particularly care where, provided it took him from the American capital.<sup>17</sup> But though discouraged and disgusted with the lawmakers at the Capitol, he yet kept to the very last his high opinion of the American people and predicted that the time was not far off when even congressmen would be honest.

From the above study it is evident that Russia sold Alaska not out of enmity to England, not out of friendship for the United States, but out of a desire to get rid of a territory which had become valueless and burdensome. No one will question, even to-day, that from the point of view of Russia that was a wise thing to do.

Why the United States bought Alaska is not quite so clear. It was not done with the object of catering to the Pacific Coast states

toute sorte de moyens auprès membres pour les ranger de notre côté quand vote aura lieu. Tous deux agissent avec la plus grande circonspection et de manière à ne pas se compromettre en rien."

<sup>14</sup> This Perkins affair "a déjà entraîné des frais qui absorberont une grande partie des deux cents mille dollars qui m'ont été donnés la veille de la signature pour couvrir les dépenses secrets".

<sup>15</sup> See Professor Dunning's article "Paying for Alaska", in *Political Science Quarterly*, September, 1912.

<sup>16</sup> Even the Pacific Coast states, said Stoeckl, "ne se sont montrés que modérément enthousiastes et je puis assurer à Votre Excellence que si ce traité était à refaire aujourd'hui, nous n'aurions pas obtenu une million, si même nous aurions réussi à le conclure".

<sup>17</sup> "Je ne peux pas vous donner une idée des tribulations et des désagréments que j'ai dû supporter avant de finir cette affaire. J'ai besoin urgent d'un repos de quelques mois. Ne me dites pas de rester ici parce qu'il n'y a pas de place ailleurs à me donner, mais laissez-moi la faculté de respirer pendant quelque temps une atmosphère plus pure que cette de Washington et puis faites de moi ce que vous voudrez."

or of pleasing Russia. Questions of friendship between America and Russia had nothing whatever to do with the selling or with the buying of Alaska, at least not with the state departments. In reality no one but Seward was deeply interested in the purchase of that territory; and the question is, why was he eager to buy. Some say that it was because he was a far-sighted statesman and foresaw the political and economic importance of Alaska. Stoeckl did not think so. He was of the opinion that Seward was interested in the purchase because he hoped that it would bring him once more into popular favor, and in order to show the importance of his act he helped to spread the reports that Alaska was sold and bought to embarrass England, to counterbalance the Canadian Confederation, and for other such reasons.

FRANK A. GOLDER.